



2007 MTD Executive Board Meeting

Las Vegas, Nevada

March 1-2, 2007

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The members of the Maritime Trades Department Executive Board are very familiar with the internal needs of the United States. Besides our continuous efforts to alert elected officials through statements and resolutions, all of us are reminded of infrastructure situations each time our vehicles are realigned after bouncing through numerous potholes.

However, the seating of a new Congress with a new majority party in each chamber allows us to refocus on vital issues facing us today that could become critical if ignored much longer.

America's ports are an economic necessity. More and more commerce is handled by ships traveling between the nations of the world. For years, the MTD has called on federal, state and local governments to advance and improve their port facilities. Some have been able to do this, others haven't. Yet, the need remains for better rail and highway transportation links to harbors. Dredging and channel widening must occur. Portside facilities have to be upgraded in order that the United States retains its position as a key player in the world market.

The nation's inland waterways continue to be stretched to their limits. The lock-and-dam system designed and created in some instances a century ago cannot keep up with today's commerce demands. As with the ports along America's coasts, highway, rail and water modes need to be upgraded and coordinated to provide efficient, safe and economical transportation.

America's Great Lakes have long been a dynamic source of trade throughout the country's history. But years of neglect are taking a toll. Dredging is needed and needed soon so vessels carrying ore, coal and other commodities can sail efficiently with full loads. Navigation systems require upgrading.

As the MTD has pointed out many times, America's highway and rail systems along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts are on the verge of gridlock. The MTD, with our allies in the U.S.-flag shipping industry, has proposed the efficient and economically viable creation of a fleet of U.S.-flag vessels to move containers and other commodities between domestic ports on a regular schedule.

The country's shipyards are being challenged by foreign countries' subsidizing their facilities to create an unfair advantage. America must retain its shipbuilding capabilities or risk losing yet another important manufacturing segment of its economy.

And, this is just the maritime sector. The MTD realizes this cannot be done all at once. There are other infrastructure needs within the country that elected officials must address.

However, all of these issues cannot afford to be ignored much longer. Congress should set aside time to study and find solutions to these and other problems that affect our industry.

The MTD, its affiliates and its Port Maritime Councils remain ready to assist in whatever way we can to assist in the vital rebuilding and revitalization of America's maritime economy.

